

*[Lady Windermere throws off her cloak and flings it on the sofa.]*

What are you doing?

*Lady Windermere.* Mrs. Erlynne—if you had not come here, I would have gone back. But now that I see you, I feel that nothing in the whole world would induce me to live under the same roof as Lord Windermere. You would fill me with horror. There is something about you that stirs the wildest rage within me. And I know why you are here. My husband sent you to lure me back that I might serve as a blind to whatever relations exist between you and him.

*Mrs. Erlynne.* Oh! You don't think that—you can't.

*Lady Windermere.* Go back to my husband, Mrs. Erlynne. He belongs to you and not to me. I suppose he is afraid of a scandal. Men are such cowards. They outrage every law of the world, and are afraid of the world's tongue. But he had better prepare himself. He shall have a scandal. He shall have the worst scandal there has been in London for years. He shall see his name in every vile paper, mine every hideous placard.

*Mrs. Erlynne.* No—no

*Lady Windermere.* Yes! he shall. Had he come himself, I admit I would have gone back to the life of degradation and he had prepared for me—I was going to stay himself at home and to send you as his messenger—oh! it was infamous—infamous.

*Mrs. Erlynne. [C]* Lady Windermere, you wrong me horribly—you wrong your husband horribly. He doesn't know you are here—he thinks you are safe in your own house. He thinks you are asleep in your own room. He never read the mad letter you wrote to him!

*Lady Windermere. [R.]* Never read it!

*Mrs. Erlynne.* No—he knows nothing about it.

*Lady Windermere.* How simple you think me!

*[Going to her.]*

You are lying to me!

*Mrs. Erlynne. [Restraining herself.]* I am not. I am telling you the truth.

*Lady Windermere.* If my husband didn't read my letter, how is it that you are here? Who told you I had left the house you were shameless enough to enter? Who told you where I had gone to? My husband told you, and sent you to decoy me back.

*[Crosses L.]*